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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

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Key stories in the media:

All media underscored Thursday's inauguration of President Bush in Washington. The three national TV stations broadcast the ceremony live. The media noted that Bush abundantly mentioned world freedom in his speech, but not Iraq or Israel.

All media (banners in Maariv and Jerusalem Post) quoted Vice President Dick Cheney as warning Israel on MSNBC-TV Thursday not to attack Iran, noting that any such strike would leave a "diplomatic mess afterwards" and should be avoided. Jerusalem Post and Maariv quoted senior Israeli officials as saying that Cheney's comment was more a warning to the Europeans and the international community that they have to take a more concerted action to keep Iran from becoming a nuclear power, than a warning to Israel not to act. Jerusalem Post quoted one official, who stated that Cheney "never misspeaks," as saying that it was telling that the first part of Cheney's remark gave a justification to Israeli action, since he said that Iran has as a stated objective the elimination of Israel.

Ha'aretz and other media reported that the PA plans to deploy some 500 security personnel in the northern Gaza Strip to prevent the launching of Qassam rockets into Israel. This morning, Israel Radio said that 3,000 Palestinian police are deploying in the area. Leading media note that not a single Qassam rocket or mortar shell was fired on Thursday. Ha'aretz quoted IDF C-O-S as saying that a "positive trend" can be discerned in the PA. Deputy Defense Minister Zeev Boim made similar remarks on Israel Radio this morning. Israel Radio reported that the girl from Sderot who was critically injured on Saturday died of her wounds this morning.

Leading media reported that two 12-year-old Palestinian boys were killed by IDF gunfire -- one near Jenin (who was playing with a plastic rifle) and one in the southern Gaza Strip.

All media reported that a Danish tourist of Lebanese-Palestinian descent has been under arrest in Israel since January 6. The police and the Shin Bet have also arrested two Israeli Arabs in the affair. All three detainees are suspected of committing unspecified security offenses. The media reported that the Danish Embassy was informed of the arrest soon after the tourist was taken into custody, but that Danish officials were not allowed into the courtroom. The media note that the next day, the Danish Foreign Ministry summoned Israel's Ambassador to Copenhagen and demand explanations. It also demanded that Danish Embassy personnel in Israel be allowed to meet with the detainee. The media cited Danish claims that Israel has violated the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Leading media reported on migration from Israel to settlements slated for evacuation, especially Sa Nur in the northern West Bank, the population of which has doubled since Sharon launched the disengagement plan. Jerusalem Post reported that on Thursday, the World Bank denied claims that it may purchase hothouses and

farming equipment from evacuated Katif Bloc settlers and hand them over to Palestinians living in the area.

Ha'aretz reported that members of the Likud "rebels" asked Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin last week to join them in quitting the Likud and forming an independent Knesset faction. However, Rivlin refused, reportedly saying, "You must always fight from the inside. The Likud is still alive and breathing, even if the Likud's chairman has strayed from the path." Leading media reported that the National Religious Party has split up, with chairman MK Effi Eitam and former chairman MK Yitzhak Levy teaming up with the National Union, following months of talks.

Leading media reported that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced on Thursday that Peter Hansen, who heads the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA), will not be reappointed and will leave the job at the end of March. Ha'aretz cited the British daily The Guardian as saying that the decision was taken against Hansen's will, as a result of pressure from Jewish and politically conservative groups in the U.S. and from Israel, which accused Hansen of being an "Israel hater."

Yediot reported that Emily Amrussi (phon.) has been appointed spokesperson of the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post reported that Sharon called Russian President Vladimir Putin Thursday, telling him that Israel is opposed to Moscow supplying advanced SA-18 missiles to Syria. Sharon reportedly said that the deal endangered Israel's security as well as the leadership of PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen).

Last night, Channel 2-TV and Israel TV reported that Attorney General Menachem Mazuz has decided to indict PM Sharon's son, Knesset Member Omri Sharon, in connection to illegal donations to his father's campaign for the Likud Party leadership (Yediot's lead story). This morning, Israel Radio cited Mazuz's bureau as saying that the decision has not yet been made.

Peter Erban, the director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which has been registering Iraqi expatriates toward the January 30 elections for the Iraqi parliament, as implying in an interview with Ha'aretz that Israelis of Iraqi origin can participate in the election. Ha'aretz cited official reservations in Jordan to Israelis registering in that country -- a procedure still possible in the next two days.

Ha'aretz (English Ed.) reported that American Jewish peace activist Kate Raphael Bender was deported Thursday after five weeks in Israeli detention facilities. It was Bender's second deportation in a year.

Jerusalem Post reported that a top-level delegation of 17 U.S. law enforcement, fire and medical emergency personnel arrived in Israel on Wednesday at the start of a seven-day visit sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) aimed at learning from Israel's experience in dealing with security and attacks with mass casualties. The delegates are primarily from Long Beach, CA.

1. Prospect For Second Bush Administration:

Summary:

Inside Pages Editor Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Bush and his administration are caught in a bind between [their] driving ambition to change the world and resigning themselves to the limitations of power."

Columnist Rafi Mann wrote in an editorial of popular, pluralist Maariv: "If Bush wishes ... to rescue the North Atlantic alliance from a veritable rupture, one of the first currencies he will have to disburse for doing so is the Middle East."

Liberal columnist B. Michael wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The most bitter, the most disappointing, the most eye-opening lesson lies in the fact that the Bush administration has efficiently and cruelly exposed the brittleness and the thin veneer of ... the cultural aspect of the 'largest democracy.'"

Block Quotes:

I. "Speak Softly -- or Carry a Big Stick"

Inside Pages Editor Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 21): "While the world is looking for signs of a shift in U.S. foreign policy -- for dialogue, for a respite from tension -- it is Bush's determination to act that stands in the way. If Bush wants to do, he can't speak softly; if he speaks softly, there is not much he can do. Bush and his administration are caught in a bind between this driving ambition to change the world and resigning themselves to the limitations of power.... Tempting as it may sound to European statesmen, the diplomatic scenario is not a likely choice today, and for one very potent reason: it goes against Bush's instincts and activist temperament. Most of the people who surround the president strongly believe that military might, and not diplomacy, is the best way to handle a crisis."

II. "A Celebration With a Limited Warranty"

Columnist Rafi Mann wrote in an editorial of popular, pluralist Maariv (January 21): "If Bush wishes to rehabilitate his relations with 'blue Europe,' in a hope to rescue the North Atlantic alliance from a veritable rupture, one of the first currencies he will have to disburse for doing so is the Middle East -- not only to the supporters of a traditional pro-Palestinian line in the European Union, but also to his friend and ally Tony Blair. As the date of the British elections is approaching, Blair is expanding his courting of Muslim voters in his country, including with promises of substantial aid to the Palestinians. What will Bush do about this? A serious handling of the Middle Eastern problems worrying Israel -- principally Iran and Hizbullah, will require serious Presidential energy-spending, not just shuttle diplomacy by the new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who will come and

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go. As the old-new President is celebrating in the palaces of Washington, there is still no answer to the following question: Will Bush, from the depths of the Iraqi quagmire, be able not only to save himself, but also to do something useful in his close entourage?"

III. "The World According to Bush"

Liberal columnist B. Michael wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 21): "The lessons learned from Bush's terms -- the one that was and the one that will be -- go far beyond the borders of daily events, political account-settling and the feverish Israeli angle. In the days of his reign -- I beg forgiveness for my bombastic words -- there have been universal and edifying lessons. It looks as if the most bitter, the most disappointing, the most eye-opening lesson lies in the fact that the Bush administration has efficiently and cruelly exposed the brittleness and the thin veneer of enlightenment, democracy, human rights, in fact the cultural aspect of the 'largest democracy. It took that society, supposedly the beacon of freedom, no longer than one and a half years to brutally crush much of its principles. Not only did it mercilessly pound distant countries, but it did so at home, too. It turns out that an awful disaster, several years of frustration and violence, a power-thirsty leader devoid of intellectual inhibitions, were enough to crush like an egg-shell a nice wrapping laboriously shaped during over two centuries."

2. Mideast:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The Prime Minister's overriding interest now is to carry out the disengagement plan in coordination with the Palestinians."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "It is impossible not to deem the cabinet's decision theft, as well as an act of state stupidity of the highest order."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Free Hand, With Shackles"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 21): "The Prime Minister's overriding interest now is to carry out the disengagement plan in coordination with the Palestinians. Withdrawal under fire, accompanied by clashes with right-wing opponents of disengagement in Israel, will mean many losses for the country. And to achieve disengagement that is coordinated with the Palestinians, it is essential to reach July with Abu Mazen still in power -- and to be wary of undermining his control, which is in any case only partial, over the Gaza Strip. This is the source of the disparity between Sharon's declarations about 'giving the IDF a free hand' and the military activity on the ground, which is limited.... The army understands the constraints of the prime minister, who must provide answers to the complaints voiced by the mayor of Sderot, Eli Moyal. This is why there is no true tension between Sharon and the General Staff in the present round, with the IDF ready to absorb the criticism about helplessness in the face of the continuing shelling. The Prime Minister also has another problem.... Abu Mazen is the embodiment of the longings for a sane Palestinian leadership after the death of Yasser Arafat. The expectation is that Israel will show patience in the face of his difficulties and give him more time."

II. "Injustice and Stupidity in Jerusalem"

Ha'aretz editorialized (January 21): "In July 2004, Israel's cabinet adopted a decision that was neither made public nor even published in the official government gazette, Reshumot: to apply the Absentee Property Law to East Jerusalem, and thereby to confiscate thousands of dunams of land from owners who live in the West Bank. The reason for the decision was security-related: since in practice, West Bank residents are barred from entering East Jerusalem because of the Intifada, the cabinet decided to enact an official measure that would prevent any use of these lands by their owners in the future as well, and would explicitly state that henceforth their property belongs to the State of Israel.... It is impossible not to deem the cabinet's decision theft, as well as an act of state stupidity of the highest order.... It is also impossible to accept the secrecy with which the cabinet makes fateful decisions of this nature, which unnecessarily damage the fabric of relations between Israel and the Palestinians. The Absentee Property Law, which might have been tolerable at the time of the state's establishment and the War of Independence, is inappropriate 55 years later."

13. Proposed Russia-Syria Arms Deal:

Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Russia's planned sale of SA-18 missiles to Syria looms ominously as a throwback to the Brezhnev era's most misguided attitudes."

Block Quotes:

"Big Russian Mistake"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (January 21): "Russia's planned sale of SA-18 missiles to Syria looms ominously as a throwback to the Brezhnev era's most misguided attitudes. Economically, Syria is a basket case whose debt-return record must make one doubt its financial commitments. Ideologically, Syria remains part of the terrorist internationale which has repeatedly victimized Russia. And diplomatically, arming Damascus while Washington suspects it of fueling the war on its troops in Iraq brings to mind memories of Russia's role in the Vietnam and Korea wars. President Vladimir Putin has earned himself a reputation as a rational man out to restore Russia's global stature. In itself, this is a worthy goal. However, by pandering to regimes such as Assad's, not only will Putin not have restored Russia's clout, he will convince people that he has learned nothing from his Soviet predecessors' downfalls. He will also make people reconsider their impression of his rationalism."